

The first day of May, 1918, found the regiment ready for any service, the discipline splendid, the spirit of the men high and all "on edge" to depart. An advance party left May 7 and a few days later the regiment followed. Thousands of visitors had come to bid it farewell and the passage through North and South Carolina was a continuous ovation, every village, town and city turning out to greet the men. Half the 120th went north by way of Raleigh and the other half by way of Greensboro, the Red Cross handling admirably the feedings of the troops all the way to Camp Merritt, a few miles north of New York city. There new clothing were issued to the whole command and practically everyone was given a chance to see something of New York city; a great experience for most of the men.

The regiment embarked for overseas at Boston, on two British vessels, the Bohemia and the Miltiades. The voyage was perfect as far as weather was concerned and uneventful except for the usual attacks by submarines, the latter being unsuccessful and in fact some of the submarines were sunk. The troops on the Bohemia debarked at Liverpool, went across England and thence to France. Those on the Miltiades debarked near London, went by rail to Dover and thence to France and on the 5th of June the whole regiment was in France. Upon its first landing in England all the officers and men were given an autographed letter of welcome from King George.

At Calais, in France, the troops were marched to a British rest camp and reequipped with British equipment, helmet, gas mask and rifle, and entrained as part of the British Army. The distant thunder of the guns could be heard and there were nightly air raids by the Boches, these killing women and children with bombs dropped from the airplanes and Zeppelins, showing the regiment the inhuman breed of enemies it was about to fight. From Calais the regiment went to Audriucq and training for the second time began. British officers and sergeants from the Bedfordshire Regiment were assigned to the 120th and this training was of great value. Details of officers and men were sent to the front from a week to two weeks with the 23rd and 49th British Divisions, which were holding the Ypres Salient, these details being transported by motor omnibuses which in peace time had been in use in London.

Some of the best stories of the regiment were gathered in and around Ypres. The supply service was reorganized to conform with that of the British Army and worked without a hitch. All hands were shown the actual handling of a barrage artillery fire and it certainly had the desired effect. While at Audriucq Sir Douglas Haig and General Pershing inspected the 30th division and the former asked that it be one of the two to remain with the British Army, the other being the 27th. At this point many new officers joined the regiment, these being part of what was nicknamed "Pershing's traveling circus" and they proved to be some of the ablest the regiment ever had. The regiment became part of the 11th British corps, of the Second Army, commanded by Gen. Plummer. July 2, 1918, it moved towards Belgium, and on the 4th of July the 30th Division crossed into that country, the first American troops to enter the plucky little kingdom. It first went to Herzeele and on entering that village found Belgian and French flags flying in honor of the great American holiday. At Herzeele the advance party which had been sent from the United States a few days before the regiment rejoined it. The regiment was sheltered in sheet iron huts and these were found very comfortable. The place was kept dark at night because Boche bombing planes came over every favorable night and yet these camps were not bombed. The regiment was holding what is known as the "Blue Line" on the night of the 16th of July, expecting an attack every second, when suddenly there was a burst of hand grenades. Everyone turned out like a flash, expecting to find the Boches coming up to the barbed wire, but found that Private Ball, tired on his lonely post, had gathered a quantity of hand grenades and for his own amusement was putting down what he called a "hand grenade barrage."

The Machine Gun Company, the Trench Mortar Battery, the 37- Millimeter gun platoon, the Pioneers, the Signal Platoon and the Sanitary Detachment were all up at the front, but the band was not allowed to go there, because musicians were too hard to replace and of too great value in maintaining the morale of the men. There were several successful skirmishes with the enemy, who failed on several occasions to rush the outpost lines.